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Berkeley County Sees Higher Percentage Improvement in Overall Health

Smoking Rates Decline while BMI and Physical Activity Rates Increase Across State

Columbia, S.C. – May 13 , 2009 – First Lady Jenny Sanford announced today that Berkeley County has a higher percentage improvement in overall health than all other SC counties as measured by percent change in body mass index (BMI), smoking rates and physical activity combined. This is determined through 2008 data from the Department of Health and Environmental Control in collaboration with the Centers for Disease Control.

The current smoker rate went down from 21.8% to 20.1% among adults in South Carolina. While CDC data indicates that SC has lower smoking rates now than in 2007, the state has worsened overall in BMI and physical activity rates. However, with improvement across all three categories, Berkeley has moved from 26th to the 4th healthiest county in the state. The healthiest county is Beaufort and the least healthy is Marlboro.

Mrs. Sanford said, “While we’ve made some progress in reducing smoking rates, adults in our state are not as healthy as they could be. Good nutrition, regular exercise, and not smoking greatly reduce one’s risks for developing chronic diseases. I encourage all South Carolinians to be accountable to their health and join me in swimming against the tide by working to improve the culture of poor health in our state.”

Poor lifestyle choices are the primary cause of many chronic diseases that not only decrease quality of life but place an enormous financial strain on our state and its businesses. The statistics are disheartening: South Carolinians rank 48th in overall health and yet we’re 10th in per capita public health spending based on the United Health Foundation ranking. We rank 6th in the nation in the prevalence of diabetes and 8th for hypertension among adults, based on the CDC’s 2008 and 2007 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System.

And while we’ve made some improvement in the areas of cardiovascular health and reduced smoking rates, overweight and obesity rates in South Carolina have climbed 26% since 1995 and 1% last year alone, meaning that nearly 66% of our population is currently overweight or obese.

South Carolina ranks 35th among states based on the overall rate of 46.9 percent of adults in less than very good health.

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The Healthy SC Challenge is an outcome-based, cooperative effort aimed at encouraging individuals, communities and organizations across the state to show shared responsibility in developing innovative ways to improve the health of South Carolina's citizens. For more information about the Healthy SC Challenge, please visit www.healthysc.gov, or contact Meg Milne at 803-737-4772.